

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers March 3, 2005

Local Traffic Safety News

Safety Belt Award Program

Over the last three months, 3 Michigan NETS members have applied for the prestigious Safety Belt Award Program that's available from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Congratulations to Wayne State University, Consumer's Energy of Kalamazoo and Non-Destructive Testing Group of Caledonia for applying and qualifying for the NHTSA Safety Belt Award Program. This award is designed to encourage safety belt use and to reward those achieving high safety belt use rates. Any organization comprised of 100 or more individuals can participate in the program. For additional information on this program please refer to the following link which is located at the Michigan NETS website: http://michigan.gov/documents/buckle-up_77221_7.pdf

Latest Traffic Safety News

GPS Speeds Into The Workplace

The newfound convenience of today's in-vehicle global positioning systems (GPS) are quickly becoming a hot commodity among new car buyers. With the touch of a button, drivers can access roadside assistance, retrieve driving directions to a new restaurant, and even book a reservation on the way. Now, employers are jumping on the information superhighway finding new ways to incorporate GPS into the workplace. However, some say when it comes to GPS, employers should proceed with caution.more: http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/3_1_05a.asp

Poll Reveals Driver Attitudes, Behaviors Toward Nation's Traffic Problem

A new poll released by ABC News, Time Magazine, and the Washington Post examined the driving public's attitudes on traffic and experiences on the road. The national survey revealed that three-quarters of Americans say that driving gives them a sense of independence and nearly half say it's relaxing. However, about one third of drivers admit they could be classified as aggressive drivers. Six in 10 drivers concede that they sometimes go well over the speed limit. Sixty-two percent occasionally get frustrated behind the wheel, while more than four in 10 get angry, and two in 10 sometimes boil into road rage. View the poll results at <http://abcnews.go.com/images/Politics/973a2Traffic.pdf>

Report Finds Red-Light Running Cameras Effective In Reducing Crashes

A new report by the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) at North Carolina State University indicates that red-light running cameras appear to have a positive effect on driver behavior. According to the research total red-light running-related, angle, and rear end collisions were all reduced. View the report at <http://www.itre.ncsu.edu/ITREmain/research/05RedLightRunningCamera.pdf>

Virginia Puts The Brakes On Red-Light Running Cameras

The Virginia legislature voted to end pilot programs that use cameras to catch red-light runners in several of its jurisdictions. A new study conducted by transportation researchers at the University of Virginia helped to solidify the decision with results indicating that the use of cameras at intersections resulted in more crashes. According to the study, although side-impact crashes

decreased and saved society between \$28,000 and \$50,000 annually for each intersection with a camera, rear-end collisions increased. Privacy advocates have argued that cameras are an invasion of privacy and are unfair to motorists, while law enforcement officials claim that the cameras make the roads safer. According to transportation researchers, the study, like other studies, does not conclude that motorists are indeed safer with the installation of red-light cameras. For more information visit http://www.timesdispatch.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RTD/MGArticle/RTD_BasicArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=1031780908322 and <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A33271-2005Feb17.html>

Red-Light Cameras Raise Questions Nationwide

The red-light camera debate extends beyond Virginia. One study shows that cameras are currently used in more than a dozen states and more than 70 cities across the country. And as red-light cameras continue to appear in intersections across the country, critics nationwide are raising questions not only about the effectiveness of the cameras, but about the profits generated by violators and are offering potential solutions. Several studies have indicated that extending yellow lights could improve the safety of dangerous intersections. For example, a study released by the Texas Transportation Institute concluded that extending a yellow light by 1.5 seconds would decrease red-light running by at least 50 percent. Read the full article at <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=292547&page=1>

NASCAR Drivers To Take Part In Safety Campaign

A broad coalition of government, business, advocacy, and sports groups announced a new safety campaign featuring NASCAR drivers. The new campaign made possible by Chevrolet, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the National SAFE KIDS campaign, will include television spots and PSAs featuring Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Jeff Burton and will promote seat belt use and the proper use of child passenger safety seats. The seat belt promotions will primarily target young male drivers, while the child passenger safety promotions helped kick off National Child Passenger Safety Week on February 13 –19.

Car Insurance Rate Increase Lowest Since 2001

Auto insurance rates are expected to rise for the sixth consecutive year. However, this year's hike will be the smallest since 2001 and follows last year's steep rise of 2.8 percent. In 2005, the average policy is expected to cost about \$870, an increase of about \$13 per vehicle from last year. A decline in the number of crashes and thefts coupled with safer vehicles has contributed to the rate increase slowdown. Although drivers nationwide are filing fewer claims, those filed are more costly with expensive repairs and medical costs.

GM's OnStar Offers Emergency Response Tips For Parents, Kids

According to the National Household Travel Survey, children ages six to 18 spend an average of one hour a day in cars. In recognition of National Child Passenger Safety Week, General Motors (GM)'s OnStar service urged parents and caregivers to teach their children when and how to contact help from an automobile in the event of an emergency. A recent study conducted by OnStar found that 76 percent of women surveyed said they would be concerned about traveling alone in a deserted area with their children. OnStar has responded to emergency calls placed by children whose parents had become ill while driving. OnStar is encouraging parents to talk to their children about how and when to dial 911 or use in-vehicle communication systems, such as OnStar during emergencies; explain how 911 can be a source of help in these situations; what information to give to the operator and to remain calm so that help can be sent quickly; and to stay on the line until the operator says it's OK to hang up. For more information visit http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews/050217/deth020_1.html

New Decal Program In Arizona Expected To Benefit Crash Victims

Select drivers in the Green Valley area of Arizona are taking part in the launch of the "Red Badge" program, a new pilot program designed to alert first-responders at a crash scene about special medical conditions in instances where the victim is unable to speak for themselves. The name of the program is derived from the windshield and rear window decals that tell emergency personnel that there is important information in the vehicle's glove compartment about the victims, including their health histories, medications, physicians, and relatives' phone numbers. The goal of the program is to help emergency responders treat victims more effectively. If the program proves successful, it is expected to be offered to all Arizona residents in February 2006. Read the full article at <http://www.dailystar.com/dailystar/allheadlines/61461.php>

Transportation Spending Legislation Introduced

Legislation was recently introduced to reauthorize the federal highway, public transportation, highway safety, and motor carrier safety programs at \$283.9 billion for six years—through fiscal years 2004 – 2009. Read the article at <http://www.businessnorth.com/pr.asp?RID=1267>

AAA Releases Guidebook For Observing Occupant Restraint Use, Misuse

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has recently released a report designed to provide guidance on how to conduct observational surveys of safety belt use and child restraint use and misuse within a community. View the report at <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/restraintguidebook.pdf>

High Tech Car Features Frustrate Drivers

Keyless entry, heated seats, speed dependent volume control, and automatic seat and mirror adjustments are just a few modern marvels for today's car owner. However, some drivers are finding that these new, high-tech features designed to relieve drivers of responsibilities and make drive time comfortable and convenient, are instead frustrating and confusing. As a result, the New York Times reports that drivers are scouring the Internet and looking for ways to dismantle these features. Read the full article at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/18/automobiles/18warn.html>

Can Roadside Advertising Distract Drivers?

From highway billboards to electronic displays mounted on taxis and trucks, advertising is everywhere. But what are the effects of roadside advertising on traffic safety? Advertising is designed to grab the attention of consumers, which for some drivers may mean more potential distractions. Although there is no definitive proof of a link between signage and traffic crashes, new research is surfacing that suggests signage and billboards can indeed compromise traffic safety. Read the full article at http://www.trnmag.com/Stories/2005/022305/Impact_Assessment_022305.html

Some Drivers Resist Toll-Payment Devices

Driven by promises of shorter waits, discounts and convenience, millions of Americans have registered for automated toll systems, such as EZ Tag and E-Zpass. However, a small minority of drivers is "holding out" for fear that they may be monitored, accidentally overcharged, ticketed for speeding, and more. Read the full article at <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/Traffic/story?id=491742&page=1>

Seat Belts Save 6 Lives After Van Falls Off A Cliff

Seat belts are being credited with saving six people after the van they were traveling in slid off a mountain pass in Denver, Colorado and dropped 400 feet down a cliff. According to the Colorado State Patrol, five of the victims were able to get out of the wrecked vehicle and climb back up the cliff with help from rescuers. One person was lifted up in a rescue stretcher, but was walking around the hospital a few hours later in good condition. Read the full report at <http://www.nbc4.com/news/4198846/detail.html>

Automakers Work To Reinvent The Airbag

Starting in October, 2006 model year vehicles will be required to have an advanced airbag system. Airbags will be required to be safe in 25 mph crashes with small women not wearing seat belts. Now, automakers are working to reinvent the traditional airbag with flexible deployment systems. Suppliers are working on more reliable sensors to determine the passenger's position, and the "one bag fits all" measurement is now being replaced by dual-stage bags.

NACOSH Issues Recommendations To Address Workplace Traffic Safety

At its recent meeting, the National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (NACOSH) offered a number of recommendations to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in the area of motor vehicle safety. The committee set up three workgroups to address the issue. Among the recommendations, it was suggested that OSHA and NIOSH develop sample crash protocols when investigating occupational traffic incidents, and look at best practices in the private sector and incorporate them into federal initiatives.

Address Entry While Driving: Speech Recognition v. Touch Screens

In a recent driving simulator experiment, researchers examined the effects of entering addresses into a navigation system during driving. Three address entry methods were explored including speech recognition and typing on a touch screen keyboard. It was concluded that speech recognition yielded the shortest total task time. However, speech recognition systems with visual feedback, even with excellent accuracy, are not without performance consequences.

Source: Human Factors: Authors: O. Tsimhoni, D. Smith, P. Green

News from USDOT

NHTSA Report Examines Alcohol Related Fatalities Across States

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA) has posted an updated report, entitled "State Alcohol Related Fatality Rates 2003." The report examines the extent of alcohol related fatalities in traffic crashes across states and over time, and normalizes the data by estimating the rate of these fatalities as a function of the Annual Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT) data for that state. The rate of alcohol related fatalities as a measure of the State's VMT serves as an important metric for States and NHTSA Regions to evaluate the effectiveness of their drunk-driving countermeasures and to assess the performance of their alcohol programs, as they compare to those in other states and regions. For more information from NCSA visit <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd-30/ncsa/>

NHTSA Releases Impaired Driving Program Assessments

NHTSA issued a technical report titled "Impaired Driving Program Assessments: A Summary of Recommendations" (1991 to 2003), with a notice in the Federal Register inviting public comment. NHTSA's assessment process allows States to convene an outside team of nationally recognized experts to review their impaired driving program. Each assessment examines a State's overall program and presents recommendations to improve or enhance it. This study reviews 38 State assessment reports, identifies 2,982 individual recommendations (including 852 that were identified by the teams as priority recommendations) and groups the recommendations into broad thematic areas. The report is available at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/rules/regrev/evaluate/809815.html

New St. Patrick's Day Mini-Planner Now Available

St. Patrick's Day has become a big night out for many Americans, particularly young adults. But it is also a very dangerous night, due to impaired drivers. Nearly one-third (32 percent) of all traffic fatalities on the nation's highways around St. Patrick's Day in 2003 were the result of impaired drivers with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.08 percent or above. NHTSA has developed a "mini-planner," containing a press release, op-ed, fact sheet, pictures, posters and other items, to help you stop impaired driving at this time of year. The St. Patrick's Day Mini-Planner is now posted on www.stopimpaireddriving.org

Work-Life

IIHS: Graduated Licensing Helps Reduce Young Driver Crash Rates

According to a new study conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), the fatal crash rate for 16 year old drivers experienced a sharp decline in states that began enacting graduated licensing laws during the 1990s. The study found that fatal motor vehicle crashes fell 26 percent during 1993-2003. The overall number of 16 year old drivers in fatal crashes decreased from 1,084 in 1993 to 938 in 2003, while during the same period there was an 18 percent increase in the 16 year old population. Read the release at http://www.iihs.org/news_releases/2005/pr022405.htm

International Traffic Safety News:

Report Analyzes Fatigue, Performance Levels Among Shift Drivers

The Australian National Transport Commission recently released a report produced by the New South Wales Injury Risk Management Centre that examines the impact of day and night shifts or rotating shifts on the fatigue and performance of heavy vehicle drivers. Read the report at <http://www.ntc.gov.au/filemedia/Reports/FatiPerfHVDNightDec2004.pdf>

A Day Without Traffic In London

Some London residents will be treated to free-flowing traffic and no roadway delays, as the city prepares to impress 13 VIPs from the International Olympic Committee touring the city. London is among the locations being considered to host the 2012 Olympic games. To ensure a smooth visit, the Transport for London has a huge operation in place to facilitate the visitors' travels. It has 16 traffic control engineers carrying out "health checks" at 377 points along the Olympic route network. In addition, a network of wireless cameras has been installed across London to monitor the visit. Read the full article at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,4662-1483753,00.html>